Comments

Response

CENTENNIAL RANCHES

652 W. Cromwell, Suite 103 Fresno, CA 93711

> Respond to: William J. Thomas 500 Capitol Mall, Suite 1700 Sacramento CA 95814

VIA EMAIL

MEMORANDUM

TO:

Don Jardine, Board Chair

Patricia Kouyoumdjian, Executive Officer Bruce Warden, Ph.D., Environmental Scientist

Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board

FROM:

William J. Thomas

DATE:

May 30, 2012

RE:

COMMENT LETTER RE RENEWAL OF GENERAL CONDITIONAL WAIVER OF WASTE DISCHARGE REQUIREMENTS FOR GRAZING OPERATIONS IN THE EAST WALKER RIVER WATERSHED OF THE LAHONTAN REGION

I. The Original Waiver Itself Recognized the Extreme Nature of the Basin Plan Objective

When the Lahontan Regional Board was considering its initial agricultural waiver (dated June 13, 2007), it was pointed out to the Board that the Lahontan basin plan contained a very unusual 20 col 100 ml fecal coliform objective. This objective was originally adopted based on Lake Tahoe's unique purity. Therefore, we argued that this standard should be amended or clarified so that in agricultural areas of the region outside of the Tahoe basin the objective should be 200 col/100 ml to match all other areas of the state. Board members expressed an interest in this potential amendment to the basin plan at that time; however, Harold Singer suggested the waiver operate under an interim standard of 200 col FC/100 ml for 10 years, during which it would be determined if 20 col FC/100 ml would be easily achieved and, if not, the interim standard of 200 col/100 ml would be made permanent.

The Lahontan Board went with the interim standard approach, but was so apprehensive as to even the possibility of applying the 20 col FC/100 ml objective, that in the adoption of the waiver they included Finding 4 which recognized the unusual and extreme nature of this objective. The Finding further indicated that the 200 col FC/100 ml would fully protect the beneficial uses of water in the Bridgeport valley, agriculture and recreation uses. The Finding closed by indicating the Board would review and amend the standard, a commitment that Lahontan staff has repeated to the Bridgeport Ranchers throughout the several years we have operated under the waiver; however, the Board has neglected to do so, notwithstanding repeated

Centennial 9: Item I. Please see tentative response to comments **BRO 2** and **Petition 3**.

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requests/suggestions.1

II. Monitoring Data Demonstrates Improvement

Weter monitoring data analysis has demonstrated a few overactining lessess over this short six-vera monitoring period. These intering combusions is single.

- 1. Land operators have implemented many best management practices during this period of complete cooperation with the Regional Board staff.
- The monitoring results have evidenced significantly improved water quality;
- The water coming late indigated lands in the Reidgeport Valley often.
 remarks the existing leads plan standard, and at times even asceeds the 200 out FC level;
- b. The periods of veries quality sensors have generally narrowed to a sample of mid-suppress months and how only breaks a sought of the representatives; and,
- c. Best practical control practices (i.e., rotational grazing/armor crossings, fence off riparian pastures, cattle management, vegetative buffer zones, control irrigation runoff, etc.) have been employed and have contributed to water quality improvements; however, additional practices or reclassical will have to yet be developed by the landowners working with the University to refer consistent countience with a reasonable water quality objective.
- 3. The 20 sol FC/100 mi basin plan eligerities is trially unreasonable, and must be amended for the agricultural ereas of the Lahonan region to attain the highest water quality which is reasonable, considering all demands being made on those waters.

III. Beneficial Uses on Bridgeport Ranchlands

The Bridgeport Valley is entirely private property with the exception of highways and certain in-town and governmental parcels. This includes all the grazing property and the Bridgeport Reservoir. Historical water quality data confirm that the water leaving the private property into the East Walker River at the discharge point of the Bridgeport Reservoir is not only totally within basin plan standards, but never has had evidence of fecal coliform. This entire concern over water quality issue therefore only involves "on ranch" coliform levels involving less than six miles of the watercourses entirely serving agriculture on private property.

Finding 4: "Fecal Coliform Water Quality Objective. The Water Board has set the Region-wide water quality objective for fecal coliform at 20 colonies per 100 ml, ten times more stringent than the Federal standard at 200 molecules per 140 ml and any other Region for generally pristine, and convention is the major use of these waters. USEPA finds the Federal standard to be projective of water contact restrational beneficial uses. However, during the finding workshop and Tribunial review of the October 11, 2005 Water Board resetting the Water Board heart public comments regarding the finest collidors standard to be consistent with Federal standards for cross, such as Bridgeper Valley, where heard objects the finest collidors standards for cross, such as Bridgeper Valley, where heard objects the first that the first standards for the firs

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Centennial 10: <u>Item II</u>: Water monitoring directly shows fecal coliform concentration. Though implementation of grazing management practices has a positive effect on water quality, the linkage is indirect and often clouded by seasonal effects (please see 2nd tentative response to comments **Centennial 5**).

Trend analysis of water quality data collected to date does not yet demonstrate statistically significant improvement. More data is needed to be able to show improving trends, which will be further enhanced as more grazing management practices are implemented.

Centennial 11: <u>Item III</u>: Please see tentative response to comments **Thomas 4**.

There is no lawful access onto any of the Bridgeport ranches. Notwithstanding the general basin plan reference to designated uses, there is no municipal (MUN) or contact researches (REC-I) use of these waters. The only significant beneficial uses in the valley are against true (AGR), fish babitat (CALD), and stan-contact repression (REC-I).

IV. The California Water Code Benanda Reasonable Woter Quality Standards

The California Water Code, Porter Cologne water quality statutes (section 1.741, et asq.) demand that when a regional water board easibilishes a water quality objective it reflect "a reasonable protection of beneficial uses." (Emphasis added.) It is neither reasonable not prodent to apply an excessively assistive water quality objective developed to protest beneficial uses of a water body of rational importance to the agricultural wass of the Lahoman region. The Bridgeport Valley is the only location in California where this unusually severe standard is being regulatorily imposed on anyone and have it imposed on ranchers.

The Water Code goes on to provide that "it is recognized that it now be passible for the quality of water to be shanged to some degree without unreasonably affecting beneficial uses." In guiding regional bounds in the development of water quality standards, the Water Code directs the regional bound to consider if such standards "could reasonably be achieved," and in doing so to take into ascount "companie considerations." These factors have not been evaluated or reviewed with respect to this fecal coliform objective in the basin plan, which must be thoughtfully considered before imposing the objective on the ranchers of the Bridgeport Valley. This excessively restrictive fecal coliform objective, which is only being imposed upon or hung over the heads of the Bridgeport Valley ranchers, and nowhere else in the state or within the Laborate Region, would develop the local commany. (Assuments below.)

The requirement for meanufoldaness and requisitory before its further compalled by California Water (bein actions 1905)(b) and 19050(b). It is impressive to include this objective on the industria Regimed Branch's agreeds for a sale daily workshop in the same term in review a new fixed authors at another its softest these similarly provisions and determine an appropriate significant for the excitations are throughout the orderty of the regim.

V. Economic, Aesthetic and Recreational Impacts as a Result of the Waiver if the 20 col FC/100 ml standard is imposed

Any imposition of the 20 col FC/100 ml standard in the Bridgeport Valley would be the initial application of this improper objective anywhere in the region and enormous impacts will transpire.

There would be no way the historic use and core economic engine of the Bridgeport Valley could continue. Cattle grazing would never be able to continue, which may be the ultimate intention of the Regional staff. However, the Board should clearly understand the sallateral impact that will also usually to resursation, fishing and other area satirities.

In the absence of commercial cattle geneing there will be no speculing of irrigation water, therefore, the valley, after initial spring mait, would only have three green water courses peculions (Past Walkir, Robbinson and Rockeyo Carrier) running through day native pastner forms.

Centennial 12: <u>Item IV</u>: Please see tentative response to comments **Petition 4**.

Centennial 13: <u>Items V and VI</u>: Please see tentative response to comments **Inyo-Mono Ag Com 2 and 3**.

Because we would have no need for irrigation we would not retain our storage water in Twin Lakes so these water bodies would revert to the 1890 "run of the river" conditions where the lake surface areas would shrink to their pre-dam (1900) sizes and return to their wet meadow status. The water in the valley creeks would be even more free of fecal material, but because the waters flowing into the valley routinely exceed the 20 col fc/100 ml, they would still often exceed the basin standard. Further, because the waters out of the reservoir have never had any feeal, there would be no not water quality gain from these Regional Board actions, which would therefore needlessly economically devastate Mone County, and would merely put more water into Nevada for their use at the sacrifice of California's beneficial use of these California waters. This would additionally violate the Federal Water Decree as administrated by the Federal District Court of Nevada.

Such irresponsible regulatory action could not be sustained by either the State Board or state or federal courts as compliant with either the California Water Code or the controlling federal decree.

VI. Immaels on Conservation Assessments with the State of California

The Centennial Ranches in the Bridgeport Valley have been conserved by recorded agricultural conservation easements. The State of California is totally vested in these conservation easements, which are entirely predicated on the continuation of commercial cattle grazing. If the 20 col fc/100 objective is imposed, continued commercial cattle grazing will be impossible in the valley and on the Centennial Ranches.

The impact of this extreme waiver would therefore be violative of several provisions in each of these conservation deeds as outlined below.

A. Centennial Livestock and Eastern Sierra Land Trust recorded Conservation.

- "Californs" funds represent a substantial investment by the People of the State of California in the long-term conservation of ranching and agricultural land, and their valuable scenic and natural resources and values and the protection of these resources and values in perpetuity." (Page 3, section 6)
- "The Department of Conservation's California Farmland Conservancy Program funds represent a substantial investment by the People of the State of California in the long-karm conservation of valuable agricultural land, and the reisotion of agricultural land in perpetuity." (Pg. 3, sec. 6)
- "The Familiard Policy Act's purpose is to minimize the unnecessary and irreversible conversion of familiand to nonagricultural uses." (Pg. 3, sec. D)
- "Grantor grants this Easement to Grantee for valuable consideration, with a percentage of the value donated as a charitable gift, for the purpose of assuring that, under Grantee's perpetual stewardship, the Property's

agricultural productivity, open space created by working landscapes and the natural balance of the ranchland environment will be conserved and maintained forever, and that uses of the land that are inconsistent with these conservation purposes will be prevented. The parties agree that the current agricultural use of, and improvements to, the Property are consistent with the successful purposes of this European. The European at this European will the successful as agree that the current agricultural use of the European at this European. The

- 5. "The conservation purpose of this Easement, pursuant to the governmental policies detailed in the Recitals hereto, and in order to yield a significant public benefit, is to enable the Property to remain in productive agricultural ranching use by preventing uses of the Property that will impair or interface with the Property a Conservation Volume Installed in agricultural productivity, open space absences as a walking lands and its natural belongs of the natural section. The natural section of the Property and its natural belongs of the natural section."
- including commercial series are the Property for agricultural purposes, including commercial series agreements as to passed alters to meet the Property for agricultural purposes, in accordance with applicable law, as long as the agricultural productive capacity and open space character of the Property are not thereby significantly impaired." (Pgs. 4, 5, sec. M.1.)
- B. Centennial Ranches and American Land Conservancy recorded Conservation Easement
 - "The Property passesses... natural balance of the randulated sovinyment, all of which are of great imperiance to Guardov, Geautre and the people of the State of Callifords" (Pr. 1 222, 2)
 - "...[C]ommercially viable livestock grazing, which is essential to the
 purposes of this Conservation Easement, will continue to be conducted on
 the Property..." (Pg. 2, sec. d)
 - "...[P]rimary purpose of assuring that the agricultural productivity, open space and scenic qualities created by working landscapes, and the natural balance of the ranchland environment will be conserved, maintained, and
 - "It is the purpose of life Conservation Headers to preserve and preserve the Conservation Values by conservating accommodally visible Research graning..." (Pg. 3, sec. 1)

VII. Responses to Draft Waiver Language

The newly proposed tentative waiver runs some 20 pages, with a four-page MRP attachment D and several pages of additional attachments. It is noteworthy that most all of this

regulatory package would be generally acceptable and reasonable with only a couple of amendments to make it more certain that the unreasonable basin plan objective of 20 col FC/100 ml will soon be taken up for discussion and amendment. Below is a detailed list of those areas needing further amendment.

A. Pages 7 and 8, sections 6 and 7. Exacedances are now limited.

This section are all the state of the water ourses in the valley, the only exceedances were "two at site" (Walker River in Town) and "three on Buckeye Creek at Bridgeport Reservoir." That is the sum total of the issue presently and that is entirely attributable to the summimment of the valley state of the state of t

B. Page 8, scotler 8. Monitoring data.

The document references SWAMP data from the basin. Please provide copies of all of this data on which you rely to the BRO. Attached as Appendix A is our data summary memo and the six years of collective monitoring data. Our actual data analysis is far more instructive than the "everyous" calculations assumed by staff (copy attached).

C. Page 9, section 10. Beneficial uses of the valley waters.

The only beneficial uses of Bridgeport Valley waters are:

- 1. Agricultural (AGR)
- Cold freshwater (COLD)
- 3. Sportfishing (COMM)
- Non-contact recreation (REC-2)
- Spawning (SPWN)

There is no municipal (MUN) or contact recreation (REC-1) water in the Bridgeport Valley streams.

- D. Page 1 l₂ ¶ 15 targets 2020 as the period to attain whetever the physostry sold by at the time. We appreciate the delayed wages dots, but it is somewhat difficult to provide samplificate with a sancted which is not period to mined, and is existely "an instance".
- E. Page 12, ¶ 19a. The paragraph regarding the attainment should join the two items with an "or" not the "and".
- F. Page 16, ¶iii (this section targets the 5-year waiver period 2012-2017); however, the language of section 15 references the 2018 date. We should be able to amend this

Centennial 14: <u>Item VII</u>: A—Note that the data cited is for the 2011 season only, which was a high water years (please see 2nd tentative response to comments **Centennial 5**). Post-waiver data (Attachment B to the waiver) show a more wide-spread trend in exceedances in mid-and downstream sites. Table Please see 2nd tentative response to comments **Petition 4**.

Item VII: B--SWAMP data has been provided to BRO members by this request. Summary statistics were included in Attachment B for convenience and for purposes of paperwork reduction. All raw public data is extensive but is available by request from Water Board staff.

<u>Item VII</u>: C – see tentative response to comments **Thomas 4**. <u>Item VII</u>: D—see 2nd tentative response to comments **Centennial 6**

<u>Item VII</u>: E—change made in proposed version of waiver.

<u>Item VII</u>: F-- see 2nd tentative response to comments **Centennial** 8

basin plan as to the agricultural areas within a couple of years.

VIII. Response to the MRP. Monitoring and Reporting Plan

A. Page 2, Table 1.

The list of sample sites should also include the site at the discharge of the Bridgeport Reservoir into the East Walker River.

B. Page 2, section 3. Free raive menitoring.

The language relating to bimeasing the manitoding to three times per monto is measurable. The program is already excessively expensive and languating of our month management. The 6-hour window from asympte collection to lab delivery is already a problem. Each ranch manager dedicates the marring of sample days to collection and all noich samples are delivered to our ranch and then one of three ranches has to drive the samples in Reco., therefore eliminating a full day of no ranch management. This cannot happen three times per month. The one per manth asympton has been successful, should the Board want to take their own samples at public situs, they may do so. This is not a research project.

DK. Conclusion

For the reasons set forth above, Centennial Ranches seeks the Regional Board schedule a workshop to consider a region-wide amendment of the fixed objective and to make the above referenced amendments.

Appendix A: monitoring data and aummary memo.

John Lacey

Mark Lacey

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Comments	Response

CENTENNIAL RANCHES

652 W. Cromwell, Suite 103 Fresno, CA 93711

> Respond to: William J. Thomas 500 Capitol Mall, Suite 1700 Sacramento CA 95814

VIA EMAIL AND OVERNIGHT MAIL

MEMORANDUM

TO:

Bruce Warden, Ph.D., Environmental Scientist

Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board

Lauri Kemper, Division Manager

FROM:

William J. Thomas

DATE:

February 9, 2012

RE:

2006-2011 WATER QUALITY MONITORING

On behalf of the Bridgeport Newbers Organization, attacked please find a yearand chart of the BHO monitoring data. It is an accomulation of six years of data from 2006-2011.

These data are attached as a component of our individual response for the § 13267 letter, and it will also be part of our annual year-end report for our meeting with Lahontan staff next spring. These data are also relevant to the pressing issue of evaluating the appropriateness of the 20 col/100 ml basin standard.

Follows are our initial thoughts on (A) the 20 col/100 ml issue, and (B) our 6-year data set for § 13267 purposes.

A. Need for amendment of the 20 col/100 ml Labouran basin plan objective.

A major factor in evaluating a basin plan objective is its reasonableness. Forgetting for the moment about the applicability of this extreme purity standard to a grazing meadow, a valid analysis of the applicability of this standard is how it applies to virgin waters coming off the Sierras into the valley. In that regard the 6-year data show that the "iero the valley when the standard extractly control to the valley with the siero the value of the same shown that the "iero the same shown that th

The Art I was the Z will De mi and 4 seems of the 200 col/100 ml objective. The high is 71 times the present basin place standard.

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July 09
              117 col/100ml
July 20
              160 col/100ml
Aug 00
             224 çal/100mi
Aug 10
              11st expl/100mit
              364 nol/190ml
Rept (197
Sept IV
              172 ml/100ml
Obl. 07
              220 aal/100ml
Oct. 10
             1410 sol/100ml
```

 $\underline{Buckeye}\colon$ 9 exceedances of the 20 col/100 ml and 1 over the 200 col/100 ml objective.

```
June 10
              30 col/100ml
July 09
              44 col/100ml
July 10
              80 col/100ml
Aug 09
              83 col/100ml
Avg 10
             104 sol/100ml
Sept 86
              Ja sol/100ml
Sept 10
              20 rel/100ml
              52 mJ/100ml
Ox 19
             820 col/100ml
Oct 10
```

Robinson: 7 exceedances of the 20 col/100 ml and 3 over the 200 col/100 ml objective.

```
May 10 S0 sal/100ml
July 98 122 sal/100ml
Aug 98 495 sal/100ml
Aug 10 146 sal/100ml
Sept 99 164 sal/100ml
Sept 10 360 sel/100ml
Oct 10 370 col/100ml
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<u>Virginia</u>: 11 exceedances of the 20 col/100 ml and 2 over the 200 col/100 ml objective.

40 million
ALP soll lithou
iso carloton
40 sel/Libra
113 col 1116c
44 col/100m
116 col/100m
114 col/100m
42 col/100m
370 ccV 100cc

 $\underline{\rm Green}{:}\,$ 4 exceedances of the 20 col/100 ml and 1 over the 200 col/100 ml objective.

Farse Of	2 col/100m)
June 10	Sü solflikmi
July 10	24 pcl/100m
Oct 10	350 col/100m)

Surances 4 excessioners of the 25 col/100 ml and 1 of the 265 col/100 ml objective.

line U\$	169 sol/100m]
June 19	Ali egil/Lithei
July 10	124 col/100ml
Oct 10	370 col/100ml

On balance, over six years of seasonal monitoring the waters above the Bridgeport Velley and infigured agriculture exacted the present basin plan objective 43 times and even exceed the 200 col/100 ml directive 13 times. These exceedances mostly occur in the 5 month [June – Geteber] time period. This is the same period that earlie are in the walley.

This presents a compelling challenge to the present basin plan objective for the agricultural areas of the region and demands an appropriate amendment. It is totally improper for the region to maintain this present objective in the basin plan. If the Lahontan Board expects the continued cooperation of the Bridgsport Ranchers, it is reasonable that the Board do its appropriate work and amend this objective.

B. 5-Year Data Anglesia in Response to the Section 13267 Investigation.
Bersel.

1. Sweezer Cask

This data set compels caution in analysis as the livestock use has remarkably changed (cattle pair, sheep, cattle yearlings) over the test period, and the ownership and management have also changed and markedly improved.

There appear to be no issues in any year until June. In June 2009 and again in June 2010, the readings off the ranch significantly exceeded those coming onto the ranch (2009: 12 in, 412 out; 2010: 4 in, 990 out). Those are alarming increases, however, they totally assess framework in high (2007: 117 s., 130 est., 2008: 160 in, 150 est.). These formula high high assess framework assess in figure 117 s., 130 est., 2009 and 2010 (August 2010: 1410 in, 200 est.). Supported the second and generally alarmed up water once any second to July, but it constitute meets come additional attention in June.

On balance Swanger Cresk is in pretty good chape, but more attention is

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merited.

Buckeye Creek

When we commenced monitoring in 2006 and 2007, Buckeye started exceeding the 200 col objective at US 396 by mid-May, and Buckeye at the reservoir significantly exceeded the objective in 2006 and 2007 in September and October.

Moving to 2011, Buckeye did not exceed the standard until mid-June (330 at US 395), but it was only 28 at US 395, and 100 at the reservoir in July. It was only 74 at US 395, and 420 at the reservoir in August, and by September on all waters were within standards.

Those data are very promising as it not only shows marked improvement, but the waters are nearly within standards. If Centennial can duplicate its 2011 efforts, concludes some planned runoff controls, fences additional portions of Buckeye and commences its waters and positing project. Its waters by US 333 will result the 202 of 100 ml absorbers.

If Communication countries and Chambery can Merchity and implement protection strategies between US 395 and the reservoir over the react three years, Buckeye foroughout the valley will be a significant success story. It also must be remembered that Buckeye comes into the valley over the objective in mid to late summer.

Robinson Greek

In 2006 Residence exceeded the standard commercing in May, but by 2010 and 2011 the May values were fine at both US 395 and the reservoir. In 2009 and 2016 Robinson waters were surprisingly bad in summer, but in 2011 they were within the 200 col standard at both US 395 and the reservoir.

Centennial hopes to duplicate its management efforts to maintain those results, and will be assessing the efforts being planned for Buckeye involving wetlands and settling basins to determine if some of that may be transferable to Robinson Creek.

4. Vissinia, Groon and Summers Creaks.

Faginizard Cress Carels have only bad a supple of smandares may
the degrees, and affirm on finite publics. Province, because, they are some such as in the
valley, all effects to further reduce these specifications would be merical.

Summurs Crask has offered some higher fecal counts in some midsomeour months, but in 2011 it was also within the objective.

5. East Walker River

The Walker River picks up not just the Green, Virginia and Summers waters, but considerable runoff waters from the Rickey Datch and other valley waters. In some years, this has calsed levels above the objective when it reached town. The E. Walker also generally picks up additional feeds passing through town.

In 2011, however, it modestly exceeded the objective only twice, once in

Comments	Response
July (250) and once in September (440). Management efforts have shown to be effective in 2011 and, hopefully, quality will maintain or improve next year. Again, Centennial is going to evaluate the efforts that are planned on Buckeye in 2012-2014 relating to settling ponds and wetlands for possible incorporation on some of the Walker tributary drainage.	Response
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